ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A network device includes a first switch, a second switch, and a CPU. The first and second switches each include a group of ports numbered by a numbering scheme, a rate control logic for performing rate control functions related to switching data packets between the network ports, and a local communications channel for transmitting messages between the group of ports and the rate control logic. Each switch is configured to generate rate control messages based on data packet traffic to its group of ports. The CPU is coupled to the first switch and the second switch and configured to control the first switch and the second switch. A first link port of the first switch is coupled to a second link port of the second switch, and the first link port and the second link port are configured to relay the rate control messages to each other.